

MEASURE

WINTER 1961



ST. JOSEPH OF INDIANA

OUR COVER: The opening of new doors always offers new vistas of experience. There are no set rules for speculating what lies behind them. Tragedy is mixed with happiness. Yet we must conquer the unknown and move ahead with God's grace.



st. joseph's college

winter



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measure

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Their Master

By
Gwen
Meyers

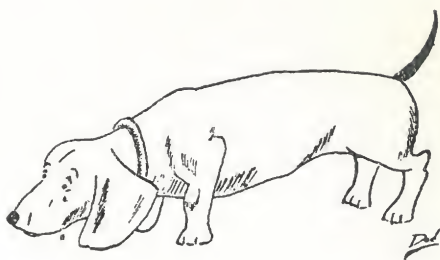
With the death of James Thurber on November 2, 1961, an era of American humor came to an end. Thurber was the last of the Benchley-type humorists whose zany and satirical observations and experiences characterized their own brand of American humor. James Thurber's cartoons and essays which appeared most frequently in *The New Yorker*

plus the highly successful stage play, *The Male Animal*, early acclaimed him as one of the leading humorists of the time. Of all this group, which included notably, Robert Benchley and Alexander Woollcott, Thurber seemed to surpass the others in discovering the humorous aspect in the most commonplace situation and in expressing it in his essays.

Thurber's reputation rests chiefly on the success of the short essays which have appeared in many collections. Four themes dominate the subject material of the essays—the recollections of his youth in Ohio, his personal humorous experiences which have a style of expression all their own, the battle of the sexes, and miscellaneous other purely fictitious situations, including the classic "The Secret Life of Walter Mitty" in which Thurber moves from reality to unreality with an unsurpassed literary craftsmanship. The pieces on his Ohio boyhood, such as "The Night the Bed Fell" and "The Night the Ghost Got In," are very humorous and well known, but they fail in representing Thurber's outstanding quality, satire. The essays incor-



Is Dead



porating the other three themes often show Thurber as a master of satire. Among the more unique satires is "The White Rabbit Caper," a children's murder mystery in which Thurber combines lovable animal characters and the intrigue of a modern detective story. Historical figures also furnished Thurber with satirical material. General Grant's weakness for liquor prompted Thurber to rewrite history in "If Grant Had Been Drinking at Appomatox," and dreams of the dual between Aaron Burr and Alexander Hamilton drive a Thurber character to insanity and death. Thurber's apparent obsession with the battle of the sexes dominate his cartoons and is slyly injected into most of the essays, but a few deal exclusively with the subject. Listing his reasons for hating women, he finally concluded that the time he had spent hunting for one lost glove in dark theaters was the basis for his disgust with the feminine sex. "The Ladies of Orlon," in which he explores the superior creativity of women and their increasing status, deals with the battle of the sexes as does "My Own Ten Rules for a Happy

Marriage." For satire, Thurber sometimes selected such minute and inconsequential subjects as his struggles with overcoats and word games; and even the terrorizing phrases of a French guide book for tourists become a morbidly humorous, but satirical, tale when arranged by Thurber's expert hand. But a problem arises concerning the depth of Thurber's satire. This problem is intrinsically related to the evaluation of Thurber's contribution to American literature.

As Thurber outlived his contemporary humorists and continued to write more and more, various critics began to reappraise his work, and they observed beneath the obvious lightness a serious quality which had previously escaped attention. Thus the image of Thurber began to change, and now after his death, this new theory is receiving greater attention. That examination of Thurber's work proves the merit of the new evaluation cannot be denied, but two definite, although not irreconcilable, theories have resulted. Either Thurber was a pessimist with no hope for himself or the world, or he recognized

everyday dilemmas and tried to do his part to brighten life in an otherwise dreary world. From the two theories there originates a compromise which reflects Thurber's true attitude, that of awareness or cautious reserve.

That he did recognize the foibles and faults of our society is apparent. For example, "The Psychosemanticist Will See You Now, Mr. Thurber" is a satirical attack on the increasing tendency of Americans to complicate the English language with redundancy and various other forms of "linguistic meaninglessness." This one essay contains a clue to the resolution of the controversy about Thurber's seriousness. "A recent investigation of the worries and concerns of five thousand Americans revealed that we are preoccupied almost wholly with the personal and private, and are troubled only mildly by political anxieties including the danger of war, the state of civil liberties, and the internal Communist threat." Thurber concentrated on these petty concerns although he had a definite awareness of the larger problems of mankind. Perhaps he actually did have a pessimistic view of the future, but a cautious reserve at the end

of some of his pieces is the only evidence of any pessimism. More certainly, Thurber, like the five thousand Americans of the study, was disturbed with his everyday mishaps and dwelt mainly on them. Whenever he did mention a really serious subject, he satirized it, as in "After the Steppe Cat, What?". In this essay, after elaborating on the predictions of the end of civilization, he proceeded to predict that the end would come when we are overrun by strange animals or insects.

Thurber refused to be serious about himself; for twenty years his eyesight failed steadily until he became totally blind, but his personal tragedy did not prevent him from providing humor for others. A man of Thurber's experience, however, could not have failed to recognize the grave tragedies and insurmountable problems of the world; but in his later years, he could not keep the serious side of his nature completely out of his writing. From his last published book, *Lanterns and Laces*, Thurber, with the line — "Let's not look back in anger or forward in fear, but around in awareness" — let us know that there had been a purpose behind forty years of humorous writing.

MONKEY SHINE



By

Daniel Zawila

The Kuldwar sea is very rough this time of the year. Brisk winds lash the sea as white capped waves rise and fall. On all sides, the choppy waters seem to prick at the grey, wind-swept clouds, but only at the horizon do the sea and sky melt into darkness. Somewhere, in that darkness, the Kuldwar washes two small islands separated by a narrow strait. Cliffs tower over the strait from both islands, and islanders call the strait, *Zabitic*, or *Strait of the Dead*, since jagged rocks and torrents of water make it treacherous.

On the left side of the strait lies the barren and rocky Kamrat Island. A forest lines the southern half of the island, and a number of patchwork gardens can be seen in small clearings. The northern half of the island is barren and produces little vegetation. The residents of Kamrat Island are small hardworking monkeys. The island received its name from the fact that the first name of all the islanders is Kamrat. Even the leader of the island colony is named Kamrat, Kamrat Majster.

Rotund Kamrat Majster towers over the rest of the monkeys, but there is not one piece of fuzz on his shiny head. Often, his ac-

tions are easily visible by watching for the bright reflection from his head. And this is where the trouble began.

Monkeys also inhabit the island on the other side of the strait, Kapitalista Island. This island received its name from the last name of all the islanders, Kapitalista. The trouble started when the Kapitalista monkeys were amazed at the fine reflections which Kamrat Majster would flash. The Kapitalista monkeys decided that in order to attain a position of leadership in the islands, they must flash bigger and better reflections than Kamrat Majster. So, all the islanders assembled at their meeting rock under the large coconut tree, and they asked their elected leader, Wolny Kapitalista, to help them make bigger and better reflections. Wolny asked for volunteers, large-headed volunteers, who would have their heads shaved and buffed. No one came forward, and Wolny's second plea was answered in the same manner. As Wolny contemplated his problem, a large coconut fell from the tree and hit him on the head. In anger, he picked up the coconut, preparing to smash it to the ground, when the thought struck him.

"I have it," He said. "We shall shave and buff the biggest coconuts on the island, and then fasten them to our heads. We will then flash bigger and better reflections, and thereby gain even more prestige than Kamrat Maj-

ster. We have everything we need for the job. There are plenty of coconuts on the island, enough tools, and we can recruit all the laborers we need from the workers' line that drearily marches around the island chanting: Yes, *we have no bananas*.

Within weeks, all the monkeys of Kapitalista Island were strutting around wearing their biggest and shiniest coconuts. The coconuts even came in a series of styles and sizes. Some were fastened down with rope, others with palm leaves, and still others had to be balanced as best they could upon the wearer's head.

When Kamrat Majster saw what had happened, he became infuriated. He assembled all his monkeys and said.

"We will not stand for the abuses of Kapitalista Island. Do you understand? We must act quickly and decisively before they attempt to steal this very island from beneath us. But in order to prepare ourselves against our foes, we must work in secret. So, starting right now, all workers will build a great bamboo wall around this island so that those idiots of Kapitalista Island cannot see what we are doing. Get to work!"

It was a long, hard task, but at the end of the month, the western three quarters of the island had been surrounded by a wall twelve feet high. The reaction on Kapitalista Island was one of confusion, and all the monkeys again

came to their elected leader, Wolny. He calmed them, saying that he would personally speak with Kamrat Majster, and try to find out what was the reason for the wall.

All the monkeys followed Wolny Kapitalista to the big cliff overlooking the Zabitic Strait. Then taking a very deep breath, Wolny yelled.

"Kam-rat Maj-ster. O-o-o-o Kam-r-r-a-t Maj-st-e-r-r."

Within a few moments, the shiny head of Kamrat Majster was peering over the top of the bamboo wall. He jumped over the wall and sneeringly asked.

"What do you want?"

"I would like to know why you are building such a large wall around your island? It is a very nice wall, but why do you need a wall around your island?"

"I like walls; my workers like walls; so, we build walls. There are no workers marching on Kamrat Island and chanting, '*Yes, we have no bananas*.' My workers are busy, building walls. Maybe some of your workers would like to build walls for me?"

"I don't think so," replied Wolny. "And we have no need to build walls around Kapitalista Island. If we did, you could be quite sure that we would build a taller and stronger wall than you ever could, simply because we have better bamboo."

"You do not," said Kamrat Majster enraged.

"Yes we do!"

"I say you do not!" With this, Kamrat Majster picked up a stone and threw it across the narrows hitting Wolny on the head. The crowd behind Wolny reacted by throwing their coconuts and other stones at Kamrat Majster as he scampered over the wall and was lost to sight.

When Wolny was revived, it took him a number of moments to compose himself, but finally, he stood up and addressed the monkeys who were by now in a state of frenzy.

"Please! Please, do not be rash! Nothing can be solved by throwing coconuts and rocks across the Zabitic Strait. Kamrat Majster made a mistake when he threw that rock, and he will regret it. Henceforth, we shall be on guard for all his trickery. We will assemble tonight under the large coconut tree and decide what is to be done. Now please return to your trees."

That night, all the monkeys of Kapitalista Island met at the speaker's rock beneath the large coconut tree. Soon, Wolny Kapitalista appeared on the rock, and after peering into the leaves above him, he turned to the throng.

"We face a crisis. You are all aware of what happened this afternoon on the cliff. Needless to say, our relations with Kamrat Island are strained to the breaking point. However, we must avoid conflict if at all possible, and maintain the peace. But our peace will be one of caution and

awareness. No longer shall we walk around blinded by the reflections of Kamrat Majster. I ask each and every one of you to cooperate and do your part to protect the peace and Kapitalista Island.

"As our first precautionary measure, I propose that we build a box kite, and when the wind is perfect, we shall launch it, manned by one of our ablest monkeys to observe what is going on behind the bamboo wall. This must be done quickly and secretly so that the Kamrat monkeys do not know of our real intentions. If we work swiftly, we can complete the project within the week. I thank you and ask your total cooperation."

Ten days later, the wind was perfect and the box kite was sent aloft from a point on the northeastern tip of Kapitalista Island. A chimpanzee, Franek Kapitalista, was seated tensely in the box kite as it went aloft. Everything went just as planned, and Franek had been up in the sky three quarters of an hour when something terrible happened.

From behind the bamboo wall, a barrage of rocks shot skyward at the kite, and before Franek could be pulled in, his kite was hit. Franek and the kite plunged earthward, crashing behind the bamboo wall.

All the monkeys of Kapitalista Island were demoralized. But Wolny again went to the cliff and called out to Kamrat Majster,

who later appeared with a hideous grin upon his pudgy face.

"We want Franek Kapitalista returned to us. You have no right to keep him. He was checking cloud formations and other weather conditions, and he carried no weapons. Hence, you have no right to hold him. We demand his release at once."

"You demand," laughed Kamrat Majster. "You demand his release. Franek Kapitalista is a spy. And he shall be tried and convicted a spy. He will then spend the rest of his life planting trees in the rock of North Kamrat Island. You cannot demand anything, and I am warning you not to trespass again, or it shall mean war. You just saw what a powerful catapult we have, and we have many of them. If you start any war, Kapitalista Island will be showered with gigantic rocks, and then we will bury you!"

Kamrat Majster turned and scampered over the wall, leaving Wolney and all the monkeys of Kapitalista Island staring in amazement and wonder.

"This cannot be," remarked Wolny quizzically. "We cannot let this happen. We must also begin building catapults that will surpass those of Kamrat Island. We must! We must! Our island is the greatest island in the Kuldwar sea, and it must always be that way."

Meanwhile on Kamrat Island, the Majster was plotting anew. Around him were gathered his

best spy monkeys. They had been thoroughly trained to imitate the actions of the Kapitalista monkeys. They could even walk for five miles, balancing a shaved and buffed coconut upon their heads. In a whisper, Kamrat Majster gave them their final instructions.

"Remember that you must succeed. Tonight after you are ashore on Kapitalista Island, you must sneak into the marching workers' line, and make them march faster and chant louder. Your job on Kapitalista island is to cause dissention and disorder, and you shall do so until you hear further instructions from me. But, if you are caught, do not expect any help from me. You are on your own. Now prepare yourselves."

That moonless night, while all the Kapitalista Islanders were sleeping, a section of the Kamrat bamboo wall was opened, and a large crossbow on wheels was rolled near the edge of the cliff. In it, cocked and ready, lay a large arrow with the end of a rope securely fastened to the shaft. At the signal, the bow fired and the arrow sped across the Zabitic Strait, lodging itself in a tree on Kapitalista Island. The slack of the rope was taken in and, after each of the spy monkeys embraced Kamrat Majster, they walked the tightrope across the Zabitic Strait. When the spy monkeys reached the other side, they dislodged the arrow, and it was pulled back to Kamrat Island.

By the end of the month, Wolny was beset with problems from all sides. Not only had there been a series of rock throwing incidents along the cliffs of Kapitalista and Kamrat Islands, but the workers' line was thoroughly dissatisfied and had rioted. Aside from these problems, the defense program for building catapults had run out of ready materials. Workers with the necessary processing skills were in great demand, while the other idle workers marched only faster and chanted "*Yes, we have no bananas*" louder. Something had to be done!

After much thought and deliberation, Wolny reached a decision. He would first try to ease the tensions between Kamrat Majster and himself, thereby gaining time to resolve the internal problems that he faced. Wolny then called the monkeys together and they followed him to the cliff. Upon reaching the edge of the cliff, he called out in the sweetest tones.

"Oh Kam-rat Majster. Oh Kam-rat Majster."

Within moments, Kamrat Majster stood atop his bamboo wall, and with a mocking grin he asked.

"What can I do for you, Wolny Kapitalista?"

"My, my, you are looking very well, Kamrat Majster. Your head shines very brightly," replied Wolny.

"And you look very well yourself," said Kamrat grinning broad-

ly. "The bump on your head is no longer visible."

"Yes, I feel much better," sighed Wolny Kapitalista. "And I'm glad that we are now acting like brothers. This is the way it should always be. We are all brothers. There should be no stone throwing or arguing. Those things are quite foolish. Deep down we are all brothers and should live in peace."

"I agree," answered Kamrat Majster.

"Fine, then there shall be no incidents or quarrels. We shall live in peace and plenty," said Wolny.

"But since we are brothers," the Kamrat interjected, "Don't you think we should live *more* like true brothers?"

"Yes, we should," replied Wolny.

"Ah good! We shall build a bridge and live like true brothers. We shall work together, eat together and live together. We will all live like one, big, happy family. And we can begin building the bridge immediately! After the guy lines are set in place, your workmen will build the bridge from your side, and we shall build it from our side. When the last plank is nailed into place, we shall shake hand and live like true brothers forever after," said Kamrat Majster with a gleam in his eyes.

"Well, I-I-a-don't know," hesitated Wolny. He couldn't see how the bridge could profit Kapitalista Island. But then again, not

only would he be able to mend the relations with Kamrat Majster, but the marching workers' line could also be put to work.

"Yes, Kamrat Majster. It is a fine idea, and we shall begin at once," said Wolny.

"Fine, Fine!" bubbled Kamrat

Majster triumphantly, as he disappeared behind the wall.

Work began immediately on the suspension bridge. After removing a large section of the bamboo wall, the huge crossbow was used to shoot the guy lines across the Zabitic Strait. With



the guy lines strung, workers began bringing planking for the bridge to the cliffs. The entire project became a mass effort on the parts of both islands. Workers continued tirelessly for over two months until the last plank only had to be set into its proper place.

On that day, everyone came to the cliffs for the great ceremony. Wolny Kapitalista and all his monkey workers were dressed in their best, just as Kamrat Majster and his fellow workers. No longer did anyone march and chant *Yes, we have no bananas*.

The monkeys sat enraptured as the ceremony began, and here and there in the crowds, tears trickled down fuzzy brown cheeks. Kamrat Majster walked toward the center of the suspension bridge with a hammer and nails in his hands. From the other end of the bridge, walked Wolny Kapitalista carrying an oaken plank. They met at the center of the bridge, bowed to each other and promptly put the plank in place. After Kamrat Majster had hammered the last nail into the wood, he rose, and shook hands with Wolny.

"This is a great day," sighed Wolny.

"Yes, it is, my brother," replied Kamrat. "My workers have done an excellent job, and the bridge shall prevail against the winds and seas."

"Your workers have done a fine job! Why, if it weren't for my workers this bridge would never have been completed," answered Wolny angrily.

"Don't be a fool," said Kamrat. "Whose idea was this anyway. You are nothing but an idiot Kapitalista!"

"Why you---" blustered Wolny as he grabbed Kamrat Majster around the throat.

The tensed Kamrat monkeys rushed forward to aid their leader, and on the other side of the bridge, the Kapitalista monkeys also reacted by charging onto the bridge. Finally, with one wood-splitting crunch, it fell into the Zabitic Strait with a huge splash.

The Kuldwar sea still washes the two islands of Kamrat and Kapitalista, though no one lives there anymore. And the choppy waters still rise and fall with their white caps pricking at the grey, wind-swept clouds. In the horizon the sea and sky melt together—into darkness.

Two Characters Search for Meaning: Franny, Zooey

by Gary Madison

In August of this year Little Brown & Co. published a new book by J. D. Salinger—*Franny and Zooey*. The book immediately rose to the top of best-seller lists and continues to remain there, even though the two stories which comprise this single slim volume have already both recently appeared in *The New Yorker* and even though Salinger has refused requests from several bookclubs to distribute it. In scarcely three months it has already gone through three successive printings. Few books by good writers have sold so fast and been so immediately and vastly popular. As one critic says: "In every respect, it is *the* U.S. literary event of 1961."

Salinger is a writer who puts much of himself into his writing. He comments on, and sometimes even criticizes himself, all the way from the secluded, hermit-like way he lives down to the way he writes. In the opening pages of the book, for instance, Lane Coutell, Franny's pseudo-sophisticated and somewhat sophomoric gen-

tleman, ramples on about an "A" paper he has just written about Flaubert and his search for *just* the right word—the *mot juste*—a "strictly English Department and *patronizing* and campusy . . . test-tubey paper," as Franny calls it. While he tells Franny how Falbert was so neurotically attracted to finding the exactly precise word, the reader may readily see through to an ironic commentary by Salinger on himself as a "damn word-squeezer." The reader is reminded of Salinger's own way of writing, his nerve-racking working, scraping, and re-working of practically everything he writes.

But if Salinger is a "slow-bleeder," as the expression goes, the result is immensely well-worth all the painstaking labor. His style is impeccable. One has the undeniable feeling that in any given passage there are just the right number of words, that each word is in its distinctly proper place, and that to change any one word or to add another would be utterly disastrous.

Salinger is at his best when he describes, invariably minutely, the physical activities of his characters. At such times the reader

glimpses the inside of the character himself. A group of college students, for instance, awaiting a train bearing their dates for the weekend, and full of anxious awareness, give "the impression of having at least three lighted cigarettes in each hand." As the train pulls in, one individual "like so many people, who, perhaps, ought to be issued only a very probational pass to meet trains, . . . tried to empty his face of all expression that might quite simply, perhaps even beautifully, reveal how he felt about the arriving person." Later, when he is sitting with Franny in a fine restaurant, Lane has the "almost palpable sense of well-being at finding himself . . . in the right place with an unimpeachably right-looking girl — a girl who was not too extraordinarily pretty but, so much the better, not too categorically cashmere sweater and flannel skirt."

In describing Franny and Zooey's mother, Salinger says: "Her entrances into rooms were usually verbal as well as physical." As Salinger portrays her, "Mrs. Glass was (from an undeniably hoyden point of view) a rather refreshing eyesore. She looked, first, as if she never, never left the building at all, but that *if* she did, she would be wearing a dark shawl and she would be going in the general direction of O'Connell Street, there to claim the body of one of her half-Irish, half-Jewish sons, who, through some clerical error, had

just been shot dead by the Black and Tans."

For twenty pages Salinger diligently relates Zooey's movements as, soaking in a bathtub, he carefully reads a four-year-old letter from his brother. He carefully describes Zooey's attempts to keep the pages balanced on the "dry islands" of his knees and at the same time keep alive a damp cigarette resting on a soap tray. Nearly one whole page (one sentence) is a catalog of the numerous contents of a cluttered medicine cabinet. Later in the book we get a very special insight into Zooey as he shaves before a mirror: "Although he looked into the mirror while he lathered, he didn't watch where his brush was moving but, instead, looked directly into his own eyes, as though his eyes were neutral territory, a no man's land in a private war against narcissism he had been fighting since he was seven or eight years old." When Zooey's mother intrudes into the bathroom, she notices one of his manuscripts lying on the floor and loudly exclaims: "'Is this the new script? . . . On the *floor*?' She didn't get an answer. It was as if Eve had asked Cain whether that wasn't his lovely new hoe lying out there in the rain."

The reader never ceases to be buoyed up and along by the magnificent flow of Salinger's language, even when the author depicts his characters as distant and remote and mutually unsympathet-

ic, even at such times when the reader is otherwise inclined to nod.

Unfortunately, however, Salinger's art excels his thought. *Franny* and *Zooey*, superficially two individual stories, is essentially but one. The book relates the search of a young girl (Franny, 20) for religious truth. But the final answer to Franny's questions proves flat. It appears empty and hollow.

At the very beginning of the book, we see that Franny is tormented by a vague discontent with everything around her. "It's everybody, I mean," she says. "Everything everybody does is so—I don't know—not *wrong*, or even mean, or even stupid necessarily. But just so tiny and meaningless and—sad-making. And the worst part is, if you go bohemian or something crazy like that, you're conforming just as much as everybody else, only in a different way." Franny is sick of everyone being caught up in their own petty selves. As a result she is approaching dangerously near to a nervous breakdown. When we first see her, her disgust has resolved itself into an emaciating nausea. "All I know is I'm losing my mind," she weeps. "I'm just sick of ego, ego, ego. My own and everybody else's."

Unable to cope with the world, she quits school and retreats to a sofa in the family apartment. There she lies clutching the work of a religious mystic entitled *The*

Way of a Pilgrim. The book is an autobiographical account of a peasant who wandered about Russia instructing people in the Jesus Prayer. "'Lord Jesus Christ have mercy on me.' I mean that's what it is," Franny explains. "If you keep saying that prayer over and over again—you only have to just do it with your *lips* at first—then eventually what happens, the prayer becomes self-active. Something *happens* after a while. I don't know what, but something happens, and the words get synchronized with the person's heartbeats, and then you're actually praying without ceasing." Later in the book, Zooey, Franny's brother, attempts to tell his mother just what Franny is so obsessed with. "And then, after a time, once the prayer *is* automatic in the heart," he says, "the person is supposed to enter into the so-called reality of things . . . and then, bingo, there's an opening of what mystics call the 'third eye.' It's nothing new, for God's sake . . . In India, for God knows how many centuries it's been known as *japam*."

Zooey attempts to show his sister that, in her concentration on the Jesus Prayer, she is merely retreating into a cozy world of her own and is, therefore, just as much an egoist as she accuses everyone else of being. "There isn't any prayer in any religion in the world that justifies piety," he tells her. "You decide that everything's ego, ego, ego, and the

only intelligent thing for a girl to do is to lie around and shave her head and say the Jesus Prayer and beg God for a little mystical experience that'll make her nice and happy." Zooey agrees with Fanny that things are rotten, but he admonishes her for her withdrawal from the world.

The story reaches a climax when Zooey goes into an unused room of the family apartment, one which belonged to an older brother, Seymour, and calls up Franny. Recalling the times when the three of them, Seymour, Zooey and Franny, were panelists on the equivalent of a "Quiz Kids" show, Zooey reminds her of how Seymour once urged them to shine their shoes before the program for an anonymous, everyman-type listener whom he defined merely as the "Fat Lady." Now years later Zooey tells Franny: "And don't you know — *listen* to me, now — *don't you know who that Fat Lady really is?* . . . Ah, buddy. Ah, buddy. It's Christ Himself. Christ Himself, buddy." Somehow Zooey has succeeded in communicating to Franny the proper attitude she should bear to a world she doesn't really love. Overjoyed, her imminent breakdown averted, she falls into a much needed, healthy rest, and the book ends.

The reader who has been waiting for a solution is likely to experience mixed emotions and perhaps not a little disappointment. He may very well feel that Sal-

inger's answer is inadequate. It is not the abruptness of the conclusion but the seemingly extraneousness of it that he may object to. He has not been prepared for the "Fat Lady." But, more important, he has been led to believe that Franny's problem was more than a misguided misanthropy. Franny's conversion into a stoic lover of humanity will not suffice. The reader feels that Salinger's answer is inadequate and only partial. Franny's search is not resolved by the conclusion.

Further, if the reader has observed the references to Buddhism which occur throughout the book, and if he couples this with his knowledge of what is reputed to be Salinger's own present interest in Zen Buddhism, he may suspect that Salinger is propagandizing Zen. Whether or not *Franny and Zooey* is a *tour de force* on a Zen theme, does not really matter. There are some grounds for suspecting so, and this is enough, unfortunately, to cast a suspicion on the author's sincerity.

Because Salinger's solution falters, the important thing in this book is not its resolution but the search of the characters—both Franny and Zooey—for a religious meaning to life. The two see and feel and, more than this, express in their lives the emptiness of their existence. They perceive this of those around them, of the milieu of which they are a part. "I could happily lie down and die sometimes," Zooey ex-

claims at one point. And Franny speculates, "Maybe there's a trap door under my chair, and I'll just disappear . . . I wish to God I could meet somebody I could respect." And, later on, she murmurs, "I just get so *upset* when I think about it I could die."

Franny and Zooey are the sensitive people among us who feel the absurdity of existence and the remoteness of human values in contemporary society. They are thus inclined to say: "We're *freaks*, the two of us, Franny and I . . . I'm a twenty-five-year-old freak and she's a twenty-year-old freak . . . I can't even sit down to lunch with a man any more and hold up my end of a decent conversation. I either get so bored or so preachy that if the so-and-so had any sense, he'd break his chair over my head." They are two characters marked for a special

mission, for, out of the chaos and rubble, they attempt to draw a stable meaning. Although Franny and Zooey experience the absurdity of life in the modern world, they refuse to bow down to it. They feel that there must be answers to the questions of life. The great thing about them is that they have the burning desire to find these answers. The dissatisfaction that plagues all those who insist that there are none is "just something God sickens on people who have the gall to accuse Him of having created an ugly world," Zooey maintains. "God bless it, there are nice things in the world—and I mean *nice* things." It is Salinger's unique, "realer than real" style of writing and the search of the characters for meaning that matters, that makes these stories great and well worth the reading.



THE RIVER

By
Steven
Schneider

It had happened in the spring. He couldn't remember the exact date anymore. Time had become a meaningless blur. But he knew it had happened in the spring and it was spring again. He could tell by the smell of the air and the gradual reawakening of everything green along the river.

* * *

They had taken over his country, not as people thought they

might, with bombs and planes, but by secretly and quietly gaining control of the local and national governments from within. Suddenly, without warning they were in control of the economy, the communications, and even the government had fallen. Everyone was kept in the dark about the "revolution," and no one seemed to know what had happened to the President and the rest of the national officials. He presumed, as everyone did, that the President and other national officials had been killed. All was lost. His countrymen knew what would happen if they tried to revolt. They had heard the stories of what happened to other countries that tried to get out from under Russian domination. Those countries had been crushed.

A few months after the revolution, the rumors reached him. People were saying that the Russians had only managed to gain control of the eastern half of the country, and that the President and the rest of the government had fled west. Could it be true then, he thought, that across the river lay what he desired from the first moment of Russian domination—to be a free man in a self-governing country, his country, his homeland. The river that had once run its course through the very heart of his country had now become its eastern border, and freedom still existed in the West.

What had started as a desire to

regain his freedom, grew with each passing day, until it became an all consuming, all encompassing passion. The river became a destination, a goal, but it became even more. It became a symbol. The symbol of freedom and happiness. With this in mind he had moved west, toward his destiny. He had moved by night and slept by day. He ran, walked, crawled, for a month always moving west, month he lived like an animal, month he lived like an animal, avoiding people, living on what he could steal, running alone and always lonely. But like an animal he always had one objective in mind.

* * *

Yes, it was spring again. The trees along the river showed greenish buds which meant that leaves would soon appear. In fact, he had been hiding behind a clump of Birch trees in almost full leaf since he had reached the river that morning. He remained hidden from the road along the top of the bank while Russian trucks with big, red stars painted on their doors rumbled by regularly.

The river, his symbol of hope and freedom, now became his symbol of defeat. It was wide. Wider than he had thought it would be. Because he was a powerful swimmer, he had planned to swim it. But he failed to account for the added width and turbulence caused by the spring rains. He realized it would be impossi-

ble for him to swim. He had crossed several hundred miles of enemy-held land, his land, only to find defeat in the last several hundred yards.

As he stood on the bank watching the sunset across the river, despair began to creep up inside him. The sun crossed the river so easily, he thought, and made its escape without opposition. And he was held prisoner by the very thing that had symbolized his freedom.

As he turned, head down, and began to go back—back where, he did not know—something in the nearby foliage caught his eye. It was a boat! A small rowboat half-sunken in the brown water, and jammed among the small trees

flooded by the high water. He ran down the bank, slipping, falling, and noisily splashed into the water. Waist-deep in the murky water, he stood holding onto the boat as if to let go would mean its disappearance. It was whole and undamaged. Inside were the very important oars. After five minutes of hectic, excited labor, he succeeded in extracting the little craft from its net of tree limbs and flotsam. A short time later he had it securely tied under the protective overhang of a big willow tree.

He thought this boat must belong to one of his countrymen on the other side of the river. For he was sure that the Russians would not permit riverside dwellers to



have boats. Now he was sure that he would cross the river. The last month had not been in vain!

As night fell his earlier enthusiasm was dampened. There was a huge stretch of open water between him and the opposite side. Open water that would expose him to the road above the river. Would the men in the trucks discover him when he abandoned the protection of the bank? Did it really matter? He would try to cross even if they shot at him. Even if they killed him. He had to try.

He pushed the boat free from the protective confines of the willow tree and out onto the dark, open water. As he started to climb in, his foot slipped on the wet wood of the gunwale and he fell back into the river with a splash echoing across the quietly moving water like a hand slapping the surface of a pond. The boat, caught in the slow moving water, was several feet away when he came up, and he gasped at the thought of it being carried down the river and out of reach. It took him a moment to regain himself; then he struck out after the drifting boat. It was getting away and he wanted to scream at it to stop. It snagged momentarily on a half-sunken log and he gained a few precious feet. Just as it broke free, he got his finger tips on it. His hands were numb, and he could feel the wood slipping under them, as if the boat strained to be free. His hand slid

down to the oarlock and he grabbed it tightly. He tried again to get into the boat, this time with success. As he sank to the bottom of the boat, shivering and exhausted, he heard, actually sensed rather than heard, a truck stop on the road. There was silence. Quietly pulling himself up onto the boatseat, he stuck the oars into the oarlocks. A sharp, flat crack he knew was a gunshot broke the silence, and he saw the silhouettes of several soldiers scramble down the bank amidst the shadows.

He dropped the oars into the water and pulled hard. Again he heard the impersonal crack of a gun and at the same time a small, splash somewhere behind him. He pulled hard. He was in completely open water, a hundred and fifty yards from shore. He bent to his task and fought to keep the little boat's prow pointed toward the opposite shore where freedom awaited him. The shooting had stopped as if the soldiers had lost sight of the little craft as it moved down across the river.

For some reason he wanted to know the date. He racked his brain for the fact of a date, today's date.

Without warning, a powerful light began playing across the black marble surface of the water. He cursed their having gotten a searchlight so soon. He stroked again and again. The beam of light moved back and forth across the water, coming closer, ever

closer. It passed directly over the boat, hesitated and returned, settling directly on him, blinding him with glare. Several shots were fired and a huge splinter of wood exploded from the seat across the back of the boat. He stopped rowing and sat drifting in the revealing pool of light, dumbfounded. The next volley brought him quickly back to action. He pulled hard on the oars in an effort to escape the light. The light was off to his left and he followed the beam to its source. The searchlight was mounted on a small truck that was parked on the road above the bank. He redoubled his effort to row for the nearing western shore. The unrelenting light was coming close again. He threw himself off the seat and into the bottom of the boat just as the brilliant light engulfed the boat. He pressed himself into the bottom of the boat and its shadow as if to become part of the shadow itself. Then came more shots and he felt the boat jerk as the chunks of metal tore into its wooden sides. The shooting stopped, but the light continued to imprison the turning craft. For an eternity of time the light stayed with the boat. Then, as suddenly as it had appeared, it disappeared.

For a long time he stayed flat against the damp boards shaking from a sudden chill. The searing pain he had felt on his cheek was gone and was replaced by a warm

wetness he knew was blood. Finally, he ventured his head above the gunwale. The boat had turned several times as he lay in the bottom, and in a moment panic seized him, for he was confused as to which shore was which. Which was the western shore and freedom, and which was the eastern shore and punishment? He searched desperately for some sign of direction. Then he realized with a half-laugh, half-sob that he was drifting south and all he had to do to reach the free shore was to row west.

He rowed fast with new found energy and hope. He was crossing the river and only a few minutes away lay his freedom. He pulled with sure, powerful strokes. With each pull on the oars he felt himself pulling freedom closer. He was sure. In fact he was almost positive of the date—April. April—yes—April twenty-third. Pull. Pull. Pull! He glanced over his shoulder and could make out his objective. People began to shout to him. They encouraged him on. At last the prow of his little boat dug into the free soil of his homeland. Some men and women, who must have heard the shots and had been watching, helped him out of the little boat.

He had done it! He had crossed the river! April twenty-third, 1973, he had crossed the Mississippi.

NEW LAND

When life shall be exclusively beneath
the liquid realm where dry-land life was spawned;
when, dying, too, for lack of victims, death,
exhausted by his task complete, has yawned
and laid his formlessness to rest; when birds
have quit their strife and fallen down to top
seductive Gaea's languid limbs; when herds
and droves of living things their journeys stop;

the hope that hallowed human hearts shall slow
its measured march, and moan to see the air
replete with searing rain and burning snow,
and hide its face and die in damned despair;
and last to die shall be the last hurrah
that echoes yet at Novaya Zemlya.

—Francis Creel

from assets to

"Hello Jenny."

"Why Mark — it has been a very long time hasn't it. Please come in. May I take your coat?"

"Yes, thank you." As Jenny hung the tan topcoat in the hall closet, Mark scanned the living room of his onetime best friend. Everything was so typically like Ned from the modern low slung divan and bucket chairs to the Miro original hanging on the wall. Undoubtedly Ned was responsible for the living room decor, as he probably was responsible for the interiors of every room in the spacious ranch house. Certainly Jenny's soft touch was not discernable in this room, and probably not discernable in the others. It would be so utterly like Ned to do the house in modern motif simply because it was *the* best, even though Jenny might dislike

By
Daniel
Zawila

A C T U A L I T Y

modern and abhor modern art. But Ned always wanted the best, and he made himself like it simply because it was *the* best. Now, with Ned gone, these rooms would probably haunt Jenny.

"Jenny, I was very sorry to hear about Ned. If there is anything that I can do, you know I would be more than happy to help out. It must be hard on you, especially the way he committed — I mean passed away."

"There is no need to be tactful Mark. We both know, as does ev-

everyone else, that Ned killed himself, and without any apparent reason. He was in his prime. He was successful, with his business growing day by day. He was healthy. He had the best there is in life, and yet, it seems that it wasn't enough. Oh, forgive me, Mark. As Ned always said, I am such a thoughtless hostess. Would you care for something to drink?"

"Just a cup of black coffee, please."

"Well Mark, please have a seat here in the living room"—but Jenny hesitated as she looked into the living room — "or maybe you'd prefer having our chat in the dinette."

"The dinette it is, Jenny."

Following her into the dinette, Mark couldn't help but notice that Jenny had lost weight. Strands of silver-grey tried to hide in her brunette hair. She walked slowly, deliberately, as if she wanted to be definitely sure of her next step. Mark seated himself in the pine-finished dinette, while the tinkling sounds from the kitchen indicated that Jenny was preparing the coffee. Returning to the dinette with two steaming cups, Jenny asked, "How have you been, Mark?"

"The same, I guess. You know how I am."

"No Mark, I never knew how you were. I only remember what Ned said about you: that you never knew what was good; that you were a dreamer who thought the world was good, and not only

a place of competition; that you'd never make anything of yourself, and never have anything, except dreams. Was he right, Mark?"

"Yes, I guess he was," Mark replied while thoughtfully fingering the edge of his cup. "I am somewhat of a dreamer, and I still think the world is good, and not only a place of competition. As far as having anything, well, I would say that I do. Oh, its not the money, success, or importance which Ned had. Rather it's something intangible that I have. Maybe a satisfaction in the fact that I am living my life, trying to understand myself and others. You might say I'm trying to maintain my dignity as a man. Sounds rather weird, doesn't it?"

"Oh, I don't know," she replied replacing her cup in the saucer. "I've spent ten years of my life with Ned, and lived them the way Ned thought they should be lived. He always gave me the best. There was nothing lacking, and he even asked me what more I could want. I asked him to give me a little more of himself. He laughed. Standing there in the living room under that ugly Miro, he laughed. He said that parts of himself were all around me; the furniture, the house, the time we spent together vacationing, were all earned by his sweat, and that every new item or act he did for me was a real part of himself. Very few men, he said, could have advanced from mere peon to

president of one of the nation's largest advertising firms in the short space of six years. What more could I ask of Ned?"

"Do you miss him now, Jenny? Do you really miss him?"

"I can't quite make up my mind," replied Jenny with a sigh, "whether I miss him or whether I am exhausted. It's funny, but whenever I was in Ned's arms I felt different than I thought I should feel. I felt as if I were just sitting in one of those modern bucket chairs, chilly and barely being embraced. And now, with Ned shooting himself the way he did, I just do not know what to do. I haven't touched a thing in this house in the hope that I will find the reason why Ned killed himself, and maybe then I'll know what to do. But you Mark, you knew Ned. You grew up with him and went to school with him. Why? Why did he kill himself?"

"I am not sure, Jenny. I have an idea, but that goes back to the days we were kids. The days when we were growing up and trying to make something out of ourselves. I remember the old block on 36th Street, the shabby brownstones, and cracked sidewalks. I remember the sand-lot games which Ned and I, and the neighborhood gang considered our world series. And there, Ned first showed his disgust for ordinary human failings. Oh, he was good, not only in baseball, in everything he did, but he expected everyone

to be good. Perfect might be a better word, but perfection in a superficial sense. It seems that he could never overlook an error, and the last thing he would do is admit that he had ever committed one."

"But why did you and Ned break up? I never fully understood why. Ned had mentioned that you had been thick-headed and refused any help or sound advice he gave. I guess he never could understand why you did that, and I believe that he never forgave you for it. Why did you, Mark?"

"The break came later," he replied, staring into his cup of black coffee. "Ned and I had worked our ways into college. We both developed different interests, and, as it happened, very different outlooks concerning college and life in general. While I struggled to find a niche in this world, Ned bombarded me with his superficial perfectionisms. He always seemed to think that *the* end of his education was entrepreneurial ability and not knowledge. He said he would always gauge the value of his education by how many assets it helped him acquire. Maybe it wasn't only his fault. Whenever we went back into the old neighborhood, the old timers used to say: 'You go school, learn be smart man and make lots of money. Then everythin' be easier for you, an' you be happy.' I remember one evening when we were in Papa Dino's tavern hav-

ing a few drinks. Papa bought us a round, because, as he said, 'Da collega boys maka my place high-class.' This always started a question session, and eventually some bleary-eyed patron, who thought we were trying to dodge work and responsibility would ask why we went to school. Papa naturally retorted first, 'Dey gonna be smarta man an' make lot-ta money, not be drunk lika you all-a time.' Then he'd ask Ned or me to go ahead an tell the patron. Once, I answered that I go to school to learn. Papa wasn't satisfied so he asked me what I learn. I mentioned philosophy, and immediately Papa wanted to know what was this 'foolosophy.' I tried to explain that it taught me about life, but this only dismayed Papa. 'Whatsa matter,' he asked, 'it no teach you how to maka money. You wanna know about life, you justa aska me an' I tell you all about it. You go school an learn how to maka money. Ain' dat right Ned.' Of course Ned agreed and remarked that Papa better pour me a double because I was still sober."

"Yes, but why did you and Ned break up," asked Jenny impatiently.

"The break really came just after Ned met you. He had been ruthless through school. He enjoyed exploiting students' weaknesses and making them pay dearly for them. And he did very well with his little gambling business, so much so that he was tagged

'Blue-chips.' I had hoped that you would settle him down and bring him from assets to actuality. But you inflated his ego all the more. He took great pride in showing you off, because you were beautiful and had personality. It seemed that he became more and more a perfectionist, desiring the best and settling for nothing less. His education would guarantee him this, he thought, and he was going to take what was rightly his. So, I just gave up. I became tired of trying to understand him and I went my own way. Probably this is where I was wrong. I shouldn't have given up trying to understand Ned and getting him to understand me. But, Ned did acquire all he desired. He married you, and I must admit, I never fully understood why you married him."

"Ned was different," replied Jenny, reminiscently smiling at a knot in one of the pine boards. "He wasn't like all the other wishy-washy gentlemen I dated, 'gentlemen' who only wanted girls, not dates. Ned decided what he wanted out of life, and he was going to get it anyway he knew how. He was strong, and I needed someone strong, but there should be something more in a man than his strength. If only Ned would have tried to understand me a little more. Take this dinette, for instance, done in rustic pine. I had wanted it to be more homey, possibly with paint and that old type wall paper

which would yellow in a few years, only to be redone. But no, it had to be rustic, because rustic was *the* best."

"Then, I take it Ned was somewhat of a perfectionist with you too."

"Yes, he was. Things used to irritate him to no end. Little things I did like—like forgetting to cap the toothpaste. Things, which he claimed, could drive a man to suicide. But on the night of our anniversary, only a week ago, Ned and I had a vicious quarrel, and we both said things we regretted. He blamed me for not bearing any children, the one joy I desired more than all *the* items in the world, Mark. I asked why he wanted a child now, when at the outset of our marriage he refused to even consider children? Storming back at me, Ned shouted that all his advancements, his business, his contacts were a complete waste, unless he had a son which he could train and perfect to carry on these new traditions. He taunted me, first implying, then saying there must be something physically wrong with me. And when I could take it no longer, I screamed at him that three doctors were unable to find a reason why I couldn't bear healthy children. No reason! I taunted him back, saying that if he was so almighty he should have children by himself; there'd be no

need for me. Or could it be that he was sterile! He slapped me, Mark, and everything went black. When I regained consciousness, he was gone and I did not see him until the next evening, when he returned from work. He apologized and said he had spent the previous night at the office. He never spoke much after that, and the last time I saw him was the following morning, just before he left the house. Could he have killed himself because of what I had said, Mark?"

"I don't know, Jenny, but I think it was more than words which led Ned to take his own life."

"Your coffee's cold. Let me get you a fresh cup."

"Please, don't bother," replied Mark. "I must be going. I wish I could stay longer, but I hope to come again, if you would like it."

"Please do, Mark. I'll get your coat."

In the hall, as Jenny helped Mark with his coat, she speculated about redecorating the house. Leaving, Mark commended her on her new spirit, and once again offered his services, adding that life wasn't over for her. And, as he backed his coupe out of the driveway, Mark wondered if Ned, who had found the imperfections of this life so unbearable, had found the perfections of his new existence more bearable.